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UNCLAS AMMAN 002819

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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USDOC/4520/ITA/MAC/ONE/PTANOS
OPIC FOR ABED TARBUSH
PASS EXIMBANK
TREASURY FOR PIPATANAGUL

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: JORDAN ASKS FOR VIEWS ON FTA MEETINGS

This is an action request. Please see paragraph 6.

1. (sbu) Majed Hammoudeh, the director of the Foreign Trade Policy Directorate at the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MOIT), called to broach the subject of bilateral meetings foreseen by the Free Trade Agreement.

Rules of Origin Committee

2. (sbu) According to the FTA, an initial meeting of the "Rules of Origin Committee" should be held within six months of entry into force of the agreement, i.e. by June 17, 2002. Hammoudeh said MOIT Minister Salah al-Bashir is inclined to offer to host a meeting in Amman. The Jordanian delegation would be led by MOIT Secretary General Samer al-Tawil and would include senior officials of the Customs Directorate. In addition to broader rules of origin issues, the Jordanians would like to use the meeting to enhance practical cooperation between Jordanian and U.S. Customs. (Septel will provide more background on customs implementation issues that have come up since December.)

Joint Commission

3. (sbu) Al-Bashir is also inclined to propose that the first annual meeting of the "Joint Commission" be held in Amman during the month of September. He would like to build around the official meetings a major event (such as a conference or seminar) highlighting bilateral trade and investment opportunities. He foresaw inviting U.S. businesspeople, perhaps as a formal trade and investment mission, to attend this event.

Comment and Action Request

4. (sbu) In post's view, a meeting of the Joint Commission could be effectively structured either in Washington or Amman depending on the availability of the appropriate U.S. officials. We think it would be most useful to use a meeting as a vehicle for public/private sector side events like the one broached by al-Bashir. If the Joint Commission were to meet in the U.S., for example, various other Jordanians have suggested using it as a hook for a high-level Jordanian trade and investment mission. In either case, a substantial amount of preparation -- and hence lead-time -- would be needed on the Jordanian side to make side events work. We would encourage participation in side events in Jordan or the United States by U.S. agencies with trade and investment mandates, including Commerce, State, Customs, EXIM, TDA and OPIC.

5. (sbu) As for the Rules of Origin meeting, we suspect that it could be held on the margins of the Joint Committee meeting (or by video conference if it is important to meet before the June 17 date). Hammoudeh suggested that the format and timing of a meeting would depend on how difficult or complex the agenda items would be.

6. (sbu) Action Request: Hammoudeh said MOIT would appreciate informal guidance on how best to pursue these issues with the U.S. government. He said al-Bashir would then be prepared to write to USTR or to the Ambassador with a formal proposal. Per the Jordanian request, we would appreciate receiving, ideally before June 15, points that we could use with Hammoudeh and the Minister.
Gnehm